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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. AMAZIANE (Vice-President)	(Morocco)
later:	Mr. MROZIEWICZ (President)	(Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1992/63, E/1992/90, E/1992/99)

REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/86, E/1992/101)

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/76)

Mr. STIBRAVY (International Chamber of Commerce) said that the review of the functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit came at a time when increasing importance was being attached to the role of non-governmental organizations. The Unit provided an essential interface between the Organization and the non-governmental organization community, and the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/63) clearly demonstrated the deplorable imbalance between the Unit's workload and its resources. The International Chamber of Commerce therefore believed that the Council should support any efforts to remedy that situation.

As a world business organization with a strong and longstanding commitment to sustainable development which had made an important contribution both to the preparations for, and the conduct of, the Rio Conference, the International Chamber of Commerce looked forward to participating actively in the follow-up activities.

Ms. FRALEIGH (International Alliance of Women) said that the International Alliance was deeply concerned by the revelations contained in the Secretary-General's report. A number of important world conferences would be held during the next few years; as similar conferences had in the past, they would be considerably enriched by the participation of non-governmental organizations. It was therefore vital to ensure that the Unit had the necessary resources to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations.

Mr. DEEN (Inter-Press Service International Cooperative) said that as his organization had only recently attained category I consultative status with the Council, he was particularly concerned to learn that the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit, which played such an essential role in facilitating the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the activities of the United Nations, was so seriously understaffed.

As the focal point for all non-governmental organizations in consultative status, the Unit was required to process a voluminous amount of information. Since his own organization was concerned with the dissemination of information, it set particularly high store by the Unit's function in that area and believed that the Unit should be equipped with the necessary capacities, including modern computer equipment, to maintain comprehensive information dossiers on all non-governmental organizations in consultative status.

Citing the numerous appeals in General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions to non-governmental organizations to play a more constructive and operational role in the work of the Organization, he called on Member States to make the necessary efforts to facilitate such participation and paid tribute to the dedicated efforts of the Unit, which had maintained an excellent quality of service despite its enormous workload.

Mr. HUSSAIN (Muslim World League) said that the Secretary-General's report, graphically demonstrated the dramatic increase in the workload of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit since its creation in 1948. His organization would support any efforts the Council might wish to make to revitalize the Unit and thereby enable non-governmental organizations to establish a more effective relationship with the United Nations. The importance of non-governmental organizations was widely recognized by the Organization and had been remarked on by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in his statement to the Council.

He commended the Unit on its unfailing helpfulness and responsiveness, despite the enormous strain under which it was forced to operate and stressed, once again, the need to increase its resources and staff.

Mr. HAMDANI (World Muslim Congress) said that his organization was particularly concerned by the adverse effects of the recent restructuring exercise on the functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit and, by extension, on the effectiveness of the non-governmental organizations themselves. While welcoming the Secretary-General's report, he noted that it had omitted one of the primary functions of the Unit, which was to service the non-governmental organizations by giving necessary guidance and familiarizing them with United Nations procedures and with the limitations under which they were required to operate. Whereas, in the past, he had always enjoyed free access to the Unit and had received copies of its reports, since the restructuring exercise, it had become increasingly difficult to maintain that close relationship; that had cast in doubt the advisability of maintaining non-governmental organization representatives at United Nations Headquarters.

The procedure for participation by non-governmental organizations in the Rio Conference had been far from satisfactory and he therefore stressed the need to draft and adopt rules governing the participation of non-governmental organizations in such conferences. Finally, he joined other speakers in expressing sincere appreciation to the Unit for the efficient and cordial service they had always provided.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/47/283-E/1992/83, A/47/288-E/1992/94, A/47/291-E/1992/95)

(a) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

(b) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

(c) DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATION

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said, with reference to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 46/176 on emergency assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia and 46/178 on emergency assistance to the Sudan and Operation Lifeline Sudan, that full reports on the situations in

(Mr. Eliasson)

Somalia and the Sudan would be submitted to the General Assembly, but that he wished to highlight significant developments in those areas and to draw the Council's attention to the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa and to the Updated Appeal.

After more than three years of violent conflict, Somalia was totally devastated; 4.5 million Somalis had been affected by the conflict with 2 million left homeless. An estimated 80 per cent of vital social services had been rendered non-operational and the absence of a national Government and administration had necessitated the de facto division of the country into regions for the purposes of the implementation of emergency assistance programmes.

Despite the highly volatile security situation - illustrated by attacks against United Nations personnel and humanitarian aid workers in violation of international and humanitarian law - which severely limited access to the affected population, thereby hampering an effective response to the crisis, determined efforts were being made to re-establish a United Nations presence in the country and implement the Secretary-General's 90-day plan of action for humanitarian assistance. A range of measures had been carried out to facilitate the delivery of food aid by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

The Updated Appeal set emergency requirements to the end of 1992 at US$ 76 million, covering essential programmes dealing with refugees and returnees, emergency health care, water and sanitation, health and agriculture. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund called for by General Assembly resolution 46/182 was now operational. He commended the courage of all those involved in the emergency operations, who worked under the constant threat of injury or death, and welcomed the recent agreement on the deployment of 50 military observers in Mogadishu, pursuant to Security Council resolution 751 (1992), and hoped that agreement would also be reached on the deployment of a 500-member force to protect humanitarian assistance operations.

Since the last report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (A/46/452), he said that the precarious situation in that country had deteriorated further. Drought, floods, civil conflict and factional fighting had affected

(Mr. Eliasson)

large parts of the country and had resulted in continued population displacements both within the country and across national boundaries. Food security remained a critical problem and malnutrition and disease were widespread.

In early 1992, there had been 7.6 million people in need of assistance; six months later, that figure probably had increased by one million, and access to the affected populations had been limited owing to political and military developments. The problem of the urban poor and displaced in Khartoum remained a serious concern, as did the large-scale demolition of squatter areas and displacement camps in that city.

Although peace talks organized under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity had not resolved the civil conflict, an agreement had been reached to resume the negotiations later. In February the Government had introduced a package of economic reforms to strengthen the country's long-term capacity to cope with emergencies and embark on a path of recovery and development. Those efforts should receive the highest priority.

Contributions to the United Nations agencies in response to the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal amounted to approximately US$ 141 million, whereas emergency assistance requirements for the first six months had been estimated at approximately US$ 250 million. In addition to the overall shortfall, there were serious problems related to the late delivery of food aid and the imbalance between food and non-food aid contributions. On 15 July an updated Consolidated Appeal had been issued which estimated total requirements through the end of the year at approximately US$ 141 million.

Although consultations with the Government with respect to access and internally displaced persons looked promising, those remained serious problems. Most recently, the Special Coordinator for Emergency Relief Operations in the Sudan had presented to the Government and the opposing factions a comprehensive plan for emergency relief distribution in southern Sudan which incorporated the basic principles of Operation Lifeline Sudan and was intended to provide a basis for agreement.

(Mr. Eliasson)

Turning to the question of assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, he underscored the importance of a multisectoral approach involving most of the organizations in the United Nations system. Focusing on the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP on the issue, he said that a major component of UNDP's assistance to uprooted persons in Africa was its substantial support of the work of the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Beginning in 1992, UNDP Special Programme Resources had been made available to resident representatives to initiate steps to mobilize and coordinate assistance to deal with new such situations. UNDP resident representatives also were in the forefront of the United Nations system-wide response to the emergency in southern Africa, which included efforts to prevent people from being forced to leave their homes to seek relief aid elsewhere.

While UNHCR would continue to play the lead role in fostering the voluntary and safe return of refugees, the medium and longer-term reintegration of such persons and of internally displaced persons would be a major priority for the United Nations development agencies. The expanded Inter-Agency Working Group on Refugees and Displaced Persons had recommended that UNDP should act as lead agency at the country level in developing the activities in which specific reintegrations should fit, and had called for a prompt definition of the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved.

UNHCR also remained committed to helping longer-term refugees in countries of asylum in Africa, as well as the host countries themselves. UNDP had committed all of the funds it had received following the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, and over 25 projects utilizing such funds were being implemented throughout the continent. UNDP also was continuing its efforts to ensure that the needs of such persons were taken into account in national development plans and by the donor community.

The people had shown outstanding resilience and ingenuity in coping with their desparate situations. National authorities, the international donor community and the United Nations system must continue to work together to confront the challenges that lay ahead.

Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs), introducing document A/47/291-E/1992/95 on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, said that the scope and volume of the relevant activities of the United Nations system had increased during the past year. The programme of United Nations Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon (UNARDOL) which had been established in 1975, was now fully operational. The newly designated Resident Coordinator had been in Beirut since January and various United Nations programmes and specialized agencies had re-established or expanded their presence in the country. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the programmes and organizations of the United Nations system had sought to provide maximum support to the Government as it prepared and implemented reconstruction and rehabilitation projects and programmes. The entire United Nations system had extended full cooperation, and a strong and integrated United Nations programme was being developed.

Coordination at the field level was complemented by coordination at the central level, within the Department of Political Affairs. He had recently convened a meeting in New York with representatives of all United Nations programmes and agencies with activities in the country and such meetings would be held on a regular basis. He also remained in very close contact with the UNARDOL Resident Coordinator.

Lebanon was in urgent need of large-scale assistance to rebuild its infrastructure and economy, which had been shattered by 17 years of violent conflict. The Secretary-General was fully committed to mobilizing all the resources of the United Nations system to that end, an effort which required strong support from the donor community. Progress clearly had been made during the past year, although national security, a prerequisite for the creation of an economic and social environment conducive to reconstruction and development, as yet had remained elusive.

Mr. BOULERES (Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme) said that document A/47/283-E/1992/83 provided an overview of developments in Yemen since the unification of the country and of the steps undertaken by the United Nations, and by UNDP in particular, to

(Mr. Bouleres)

mobilize international assistance. Notwithstanding the difficulties described in paragraph 4, the Government had introduced economic reforms, established new population and employment policies and had adopted a new policy approach to environmental protection, all of which efforts deserved the support of the international community.

The first round-table conference for Yemen, held at Geneva on 30 June and 1 July 1992 had provided an opportunity for a constructive discussion of Yemen policies, problems and needs. The next such conference was scheduled for the second half of 1993; in the meantime a series of sectoral consultations would be held to coordinate the international response to the country's needs with respect to water, agriculture, human development, energy, infrastructure, environment and macroeconomic management. Many donor countries and organizations had already responded to the call for assistance.

Mr. PETERS (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that during the past year refugee crises in Africa had continued unabated. The impact of successive emergencies on millions of drought victims, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in the Horn of Africa, Angola, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique and the Sudan had been particularly severe. The effect of the drought in southern Africa was of particular concern and threatened the region's capacity to carry out reforms vital to longer-term development.

Despite that somber picture, the recent impetus towards peace and democracy in many parts of Africa had improved prospects for voluntary repatriation. UNHCR, together with the relevant national authorities, was preparing for or undertaking the repatriation of more than 1 million refugees throughout the continent. Countries of origin required assistance to reabsorb their nationals if large-scale repatriation was to be successful. UNHCR had called on all parties to cooperate in creating a safe and secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to refugees and returnees.

In West Africa, the situation had been marked by the continuing massive presence of Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries and by the more recent exodus from Sierra Leone into Guinea and Liberia. Despite some recent progress in the search for peace in Liberia, the political and security

(Mr. Peters)

situation still precluded the organized voluntary repatriation of the 655,000 Liberian refugees outside their country, although since April some 30,000 persons had returned spontaneously. UNHCR had continued to provide humanitarian assistance to West African countries hosting Liberian refugees. As efforts to create conditions conducive to organized repatriation continued, UNHCR would continue to help build infrastructure and would pursue its efforts to sensitize the major parties to the requirements for a mass repatriation in safety and dignity, while stepping up its assistance to persons returning spontaneously and its related monitoring activities.

In the Horn of Africa, the situation was compounded by widespread insecurity and famine posing a major challenge. Throughout much of 1991, the security situation in Ethiopia had been a major obstacle to the effective delivery of assistance to refugees. A significant improvement since January 1992 had permitted deliveries of food to the 430,000 Somali refugees in the east. However, the deterioration of the security situation in Somalia had caused continuing influxes of new arrivals in Ethiopia. The agencies of the United Nations system were working together to provide assistance on a non-discriminatory basis to refugees, returnees, displaced persons and affected local populations. A joint mission involving UNHCR, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund had visited north-west Somalia in June to assess the possibility of restarting the returnee programme which had to be suspended, and the timing of such an initiative was under consideration. In making every possible effort to carry out its mandate in Somalia, UNHCR had maintained a cooperative working relationship with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

The situation in Somalia had been a major factor in precipitating the mass return of Ethiopian refugees to their country of origin, and efforts to disperse them to their places of origin had continued despite security constraints. Quick impact projects had been introduced to benefit returnees and local communities with improved services and enhance their productive capacity.

Some quarter of a million Sudanese refugees in western Ethiopia had spilled back into the Sudan in May 1991 and were receiving emergency

(Mr. Peters)

assistance through Operation Lifeline Sudan, which was supported by UNHCR. The repatriation of as many Eritrean refugees from the Sudan had been under discussion, but substantial organized repatriation was not likely to commence before the end of 1992; meanwhile, UNHCR was continuing to provide care and maintenance in the Sudan.

Djibouti, with a population of only half a million, had been host at the end of April 1992 to more than 100,000 refugees. Since that time, the Djibouti authorities had begun transferring some refugees to camps where UNHCR assistance was provided.

Kenya had been severely affected by events in the Horn of Africa. By June 1992, over 300,000 persons had been registered as refugees, and another 20,000 had fled to Kenya from the civil war in southern Sudan. Problems of security, accessibility and land availability had been important constraints on providing assistance to the refugees. Although UNHCR had been providing emergency assistance and the World Food Programme had been providing basic food, a continuing flow of new arrivals would pose serious logistical problems.

The peace accord between the Government of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) had paved the way for Africa's largest voluntary repatriation, of some 300,000 Angolan refugees, which was to commence during the second half of 1992. Spontaneous repatriations had been occurring since November 1991 and arrangements had been made to provide UNHCR assistance to those concerned; however, many land mines remained to be cleared prior to any large-scale repatriation.

The problem of Rwandese refugees, of whom about 500,000 were residing in five neighbouring countries, had been entrusted to the Organization of African Unity and UNHCR for solution; it was hoped that voluntary repatriation could begin during the second half of 1992.

Southern Africa was currently suffering one of the worst droughts in living memory, adding to the pressure on government resources, and further major population movements were expected from Mozambique into Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, whose aggregate refugee population already exceeded 1 million. In several asylum countries the continued presence of large refugee populations was creating antagonism and compassion fatigue.

(Mr. Peters)

It would become practically impossible for UNHCR to attend to the particular needs of refugees and returnees in the region unless the overall needs of the affected populations were addressed. UNHCR had been coordinating its response to the serious food deficits for refugees with the World Food Programme and with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. To avert major loss of life, however, the international community must step up its humanitarian efforts.

A number of difficulties had been encountered in recent months with the voluntary repatriation of South African refugees; political and economic conditions in South Africa and fear of harassment, intimidation, detention or arrest were causing some potential returnees to have second thoughts.

UNHCR had been steadily increasing the resources allocated to Africa, but those increases had been outstripped by increases in the number of refugees. In 1992, UNHCR would devote 40 per cent of its resources to programmes in Africa, which had some 30 per cent of the world's refugees. Lasting solutions to Africa's refugee problems called for a concerted approach by the United Nations system and the international community, since returnees would be going back to countries devastated by war and in need of comprehensive programmes for political, economic and social reconstruction.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that in the last decade the United Nations had been called upon to provide urgent and extensive assistance to populations afflicted by natural or man-made disasters, and many new emergency situations had emerged. The number of people affected by disasters was increasing, while the number of people living in poverty was also rising. It was more than ever essential to see humanitarian needs as a concern of the international community as a whole, and the United Nations must play a crucial and growing role in humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, both directly and as a catalyst for efforts by Governments and regional and non-governmental organizations.

Emergency assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and in ways that would be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Economic growth and sustainable development were essential and adequate resources must be made available to address the development problems of the developing countries.

Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that his delegation was gratified that the work initiated one year earlier had culminated in a General Assembly resolution establishing the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Its mandate had already evolved from an exclusive focus on emergency assistance coordination to include also the broader responsibilities of preventive diplomacy, conflict resolution, and early warning systems for emerging natural and man-made disasters, and it had begun to prove its worth through its leadership in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa.

One of the Department's most important tasks in the coming year would be to assist in the formulation of a humanitarian assistance plan specifying the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies in all aspects of humanitarian assistance within the continuum from relief to rehabilitation to development. The establishment of such a plan would be a critical step in enhancing emergency assistance coordination within the United Nations development system.

His delegation favoured the appointment by the Secretary-General of United Nations coordinators in each major country receiving assistance from the United Nations development system, and stressed the importance of further long-term and short-term secondments to the Department from all the specialized agencies operating in the field in order to ensure immediate access to the broadest possible range of expertise.

Mr. WANG Xinggen (China) said that natural and man-made disasters had in the past few years brought huge losses of life and property in various countries, necessitating special economic and disaster relief assistance. The international community was duty-bound to help people in disaster-stricken areas to resettle, restore production and reconstruct their homelands.

While the General Assembly had adopted resolutions, at its forty-sixth session, on humanitarian emergency assistance to a variety of countries, the international community's response fell far short of meeting the needs of the disaster-stricken areas; he hoped that countries that were in a position to do so, especially the industrialized countries, would provide more humanitarian assistance. China, itself a developing country prone to natural disasters - which in the last year had affected as many as 200 million people - had in

(Mr. Wang Xinggen, China)

that same year provided, within its capabilities, disaster relief assistance to the Sudan, Mozambique, Angola and others.

His delegation noted with pleasure that the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) had played an important role in coordinating emergency relief operations, providing $207 million worth of assistance to disaster-stricken areas in the 1990-1991 biennium, 15 times as much as during the 1986-1987 biennium. Not only did UNDRO quickly alert the international community to disasters, it also lost no time in mobilizing emergency assistance.

His delegation hoped that the newly appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs would make the best use of limited resources, taking into account the needs and the development plans of the affected countries. However, humanitarian assistance should be given in full respect for the sovereignty of the recipient country and no preconditions should be attached; otherwise, humanitarian assistance would be deprived of its intrinsic meaning.

Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that at its last session, the General Assembly had, through a hard-won consensus resolution, created a new set of instruments for United Nations response to humanitarian emergencies, including the position of humanitarian emergency assistance coordinator. Although the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had been in existence for little more than six months, it had already made some notable achievements. In late May 1992, the central emergency revolving fund had reached its target of $50 million, which allowed it to become operational, and was being put to immediate use for relief activity in the Horn of Africa.

Nearly $600 million in pledges had been raised for victims of the drought in southern Africa, illustrating how, if efforts were coordinated effectively, as was being done by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the international community could respond decisively to emergency situations. As a result, there was a prospect of the concept of a continuum from humanitarian emergency relief through rehabilitation, to sustainable economic growth becoming a reality.

The distribution of relief supplies in southern Africa would depend greatly on South Africa's cooperation; so far that cooperation had been

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

forthcoming. Moreover, the parties to the talks in Rome over Mozambique's future had reached agreement on the establishment of corridors of tranquillity for the channelling of relief supplies into that country. The negotiation of such corridors of peace could lead to more than the delivery of relief supplies; humanitarian activities could be a critical factor in limiting or controlling violence and could make a positive contribution to the resolution of conflicts.

In Somalia, progress was being made on humanitarian relief efforts, with the delivery of food and with agreement being reached to send 50 United Nations observers.

Since his appointment, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs had had to face a number of serious challenges, not just in southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, but also in the border areas of Bangladesh and Myanmar, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Iraq. The return to Myanmar from Bangladesh of the Rohingya refugees could be satisfactorily carried out only if the United Nations had a presence in Myanmar, and he urged that country to accept such a presence. Australia was hopeful that concerted United Nations and international action could restore peace and order to Bosnia and Herzegovina and fully supported the continuing United Nations programme of humanitarian assistance to that country.

Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) welcomed the establishment of the central emergency revolving fund. In view of the growing gap between need for emergency relief and available resources, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would continue to serve as a catalyst for efforts by Governments, donors and others. His delegation also welcomed the pledge by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs that the guiding principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 would be adhered to, and expressed appreciation for the efforts to repatriate the Myanmar refugees living in Bangladesh. Since emergency assistance was not an end in itself, the root causes of emergency situations needed to be addressed. He fully shared the view that the United Nations early warning system would be a valuable instrument for preventive action. Adequate disaster preparedness should receive high priority since it could greatly reduce the effects of disasters.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

The United Nations must provide the linkage between humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and long-term development. Particular attention should be given to vulnerable groups, which were the first victims of any disaster. The linkage between immediate disaster relief, rehabilitation and long-term development was essential to bring about lasting solutions. Coordination of disaster relief assistance was important both to ensure effectiveness and to alleviate human suffering. The capacity of Governments to cope with disasters should be enhanced. The resident coordinators could play a very useful role at the country level in that regard and their role should be further strengthened.

Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in emergencies and disaster relief during 1991-1992 had been guided not only by the crisis situations that it had addressed, but also by changes in the working arrangements in the United Nations system for coping with emergency situations. Of major importance were the Organization's responses to the droughts in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa. The FAO global information and early warning system continued to monitor crop and food supply conditions throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries that were most vulnerable to food shortages and disasters and where emergency situations might arise. It had also sent crop and food supply assessment missions to Tanzania, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Laos, Kenya and the southern Africa subregion. Several of those missions had been carried out jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP), whereby FAO was responsible for assessing overall needs and WFP for evaluating the requirements of target beneficiary groups and logistic aspects. The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) had also collaborated with FAO missions and its findings had provided the basis for a series of special warnings and reports. FAO had participated in United Nations inter-agency needs assessment missions to Cambodia, Mozambique and Angola and had contributed to the consolidated United Nations appeal for international emergency humanitarian relief for those three countries.

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

Through its Office for Special Relief Operations, FAO was providing support to emergency and rehabilitation projects in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Lebanon, Cambodia, Bangladesh and the Philippines. In Latin America, emergency assistance had been provided for agricultural rehabilitation projects in Bolivia, Cuba and Nicaragua.

FAO was pleased to note that the response to the appeal on behalf of the drought-affected countries of southern Africa had been positive. FAO collaboration with the newly established Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) had started well. It had participated in the preparation of the various United Nations appeals coordinated by DHA, providing an assessment of the crop and food supply situation and proposals for agricultural emergency rehabilitation programmes. FAO was also participating in the various inter-agency mechanisms being put in place by the Department. The latter had already demonstrated its effectiveness as an instrument for coordinating and mobilizing international emergency assistance. He was pleased to note that the FAO mandate for assessing food needs and agricultural rehabilitation requirements was being fully respected and its ability to assist in those areas effectively utilized.

Mr. MONTERO (Chile) stressed the need to strengthen practical disaster relief measures within the global strategies aimed at reversing the consequences of natural disasters. Chile supported the important work carried out by the United Nations in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance and felt that General Assembly resolution 46/182 provided an appropriate framework for enhancing system-wide coordination in that regard. His delegation fully supported the guiding principles set forth in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the annex to the resolution.

It was gratifying to learn that the goal of $50 million had been achieved for the central emergency revolving fund and that those resources would be used speedily and effectively in emergency situations. Those funds should be transferred only under exceptional circumstances and should be used to meet urgent needs. The Organization's role in the field of disaster prevention and mitigation was very important. The establishment of the new humanitarian relief structures would strengthen prevention and early warning measures. The

(Mr. Montero, Chile)

Organization could promote a greater exchange and dissemination of technical information for evaluating, anticipating and mitigating disasters. Economic growth and sustainable development were essential to enable States to cope better with natural disasters and other emergencies. The guiding principles to that effect set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182 were fundamental in that regard.

His delegation reaffirmed the basic role of the United Nations system as an essential instrument for promoting international cooperation for development and stressed that its work should focus in particular on the areas which impeded development. States that were prone to natural disasters must strengthen their national preparedness structures to be better able to cope with such emergencies. The affected country must determine the magnitude of a natural disaster and the need for international assistance, and donor States and international organizations should provide only the type of aid requested. Efforts should be made to provide international assistance within 24 hours. The signing of immediate-aid agreements with neighbouring countries would facilitate speedy rescue and relief efforts. Lastly, donor countries should consider sending financial resources for acquiring equipment corresponding to the specific nature of each disaster situation.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that the reform of the system-wide response to humanitarian emergencies was very much a part of the Organization's ongoing efforts to revitalize the system and make it more dynamic by assigning greater priority to and ensuring improved coordination of economic and social policy and programmes of the United Nations. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had been established as a central coordinating body with the mandate to maximize the speed and efficiency of the international community's response to natural and man-made disasters. He agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs that the Department should be a coordinating, rather than operational, body, and that it should be called upon to operate in complex emergencies involving political aspects as well as humanitarian assistance. However, if it overextends itself, it would risk failure.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

It was imperative that humanitarian relief be provided in a manner consistent with the long-term development needs of the affected country and that it be managed so as to mitigate the possibilities of recurrence.

The Department was proceeding along the right track and required continued cooperation from Member States and the agencies of the United Nations system to address the significant challenges which lay ahead. The Department was engaged in an unprecedented effort to coordinate its work between New York and Geneva. The Director of the Geneva office, besides facing the fundamental task of building a fully equipped, qualified staff, must ensure that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee was fully utilized and must determine the most effective role for the UNDRO elements of the Geneva office. In view of the Department's very broad mandate, it was necessary to define more clearly how the agencies of the United Nations system supported its efforts. A special challenge in coordinating the United Nations reaction to humanitarian emergencies lay in determining how the agencies allocated their efforts to provide relief to the internally displaced, who should not necessarily be the responsibility of only one sectoral agency. It was also important to consider how to make the best use of resident coordinators.

He welcomed the commendable efforts by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to establish better monitoring and reporting on United Nations humanitarian activities, in order to keep donors well informed on the progress of its efforts, the financing of consolidated appeals and the progress towards long-range goals.

In view of the growing links between the provision of humanitarian relief and political and security issues, he stressed the need for those once distinct realms to be addressed together. Humanitarian diplomacy, in the form of relief supplies, corridors of peace and zones of tranquillity, could have a catalytic effect on the settlement of political issues directly related to human emergencies. No political settlement would be possible in Somalia or the Sudan without an adequate food supply. The new Department would therefore have to develop efficient channels for cooperation with other departments, to ensure that humanitarian relief efforts benefited from, and contributed to, the reduction of underlying political disputes.

(Mr. Marks, United States)

The recent appeal for drought victims in southern Africa had raised pledges in excess of US$ 600 million and could be counted a major success. The United States response to that appeal of US$ 359 million, added to its contribution to the central emergency revolving fund, reflected its commitment to the reform efforts which had resulted in the creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

The massive problems in the Horn of Africa convincingly demonstrated the need for continued efforts to improve the United Nations ability to respond to complex and prolonged emergencies. It was essential for the Organization, with the help of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to coordinate its activities to remove all humanitarian and political obstacles to stability and development in those countries and he therefore called upon the entire donor community to give its full support to the efforts by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to improve coordination of the United Nations humanitarian relief effort in response to the needs of Somalia.

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) would give careful consideration to the various comments made during the debate. It intended to cooperate very closely with the representatives of Member States and the specialized agencies in dealing with the emergency situations that had arisen after the end of the cold war. A balance must be struck between the principle of sovereignty of States and the principle of access to humanitarian assistance. The United Nations had an opportunity to develop a new area of activities both with regard to preventive action and in the economic and social fields. If emergency relief was seen as one end of a continuum leading to rehabilitation and development, that would send a strong message of hope to people in distress and donors in the industrialized world.

The Department would be guided by the principles set forth in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The key issues of the sovereignty and responsibility of Governments were the basis for "humanitarian diplomacy", aimed at reaching people in distress. He hoped that the central emergency revolving fund could be used dynamically and effectively and that resources

(Mr. Eliasson)

could be renewed through consolidated appeals. It was gratifying to note the positive comments made with regard to inter-agency work. In that connection, he sought to promote a "culture of cooperation" with the operational agencies. The mechanism of consolidated appeals was working very well. There had been a positive response to the southern African appeal and he hoped that a similar response would be given to the Horn of Africa appeal. The Department would work hard to enhance the early warning and rapid response system and would deal with the mine-clearance problems on a number of levels. It would also pursue the crucial work of assisting the growing number of refugees and displaced persons in the world.

It was shocking to note the increasing number of deliberate attacks against not only civilians but also United Nations personnel and humanitarian aid workers. It was essential to react very strongly and halt that dangerous trend. Member States must uphold the values set forth in the Charter. If that trend was stopped, the conditions for mobilizing resources would be drastically improved. If the security situation improved in Somalia, the international community had the obligation to make a massive humanitarian effort in that country. With regard to the situation in Iraq, the negotiations on a memorandum of understanding were continuing, while security and financial problems increased. The need to finance the humanitarian programme in Iraq was a matter of urgent concern. The Department was prepared to continue its efforts to solve the refugee problem in Myanmar and Bangladesh and he hoped that the parties concerned would take advantage of United Nations services in that regard. Lastly, he was gratified to note the expressions of support for the work of the Department and urged Member States to give positive consideration to the funding of its personnel, which was still conducted on an extrabudgetary basis. The United Nations must be given the resources to meet the new challenges that had arisen. The Organization was an expression of the collective will of its Member States to meet the daunting tasks facing it.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.

UNITED
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Economic and Social Council

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For participants only

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3 August 1992

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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 22 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER-RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/47/283-E/1992/83, A/47/288-E/1992/94, A/47/291-E/1992/95)

(a) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (continued)

(c) DISASTER-RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77. The need for humanitarian assistance resulted from natural and man-made disasters as well as the shortcomings of international cooperation for economic and social development. Economic development led to greater political stability and enhanced preparedness to cope with natural disasters. That linkage must be kept in mind at all times. Brazil, which extended its solidarity to all the countries that suffered the effects of natural or man-made disasters, was saddened by the deterioration of the humanitarian situations in many parts of the world, particularly Africa. He strongly encouraged the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to continue to focus attention on those situations to enable the United Nations to mobilize maximum support for humanitarian action.

He noted with satisfaction the various steps taken by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182. It was encouraging to note that the central emergency revolving fund had begun functioning as an important mechanism to make United Nations humanitarian action more effective in the initial phase of emergencies. In that connection, it would be useful to learn whether there was a tentative operational definition of what constituted the "initial phase" of an emergency and whether the idea was to respond to a large number of emergency situations or to deal more effectively with a smaller number.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

Humanitarian initiatives in conflict situations had highlighted the significance of, and need for, a distinction between political and humanitarian efforts. There had recently been a number of cases where humanitarian aid had been hindered with the clear intent of achieving political goals. In addition to being counterproductive, such behaviour violated international norms. His delegation would like to have more information on the working relationship between the New York office of DHA and the political and economic departments. The Under-Secretary-General might wish to share his thoughts about the ways in which the working relationship between DHA and the political departments had a bearing on the question of avoiding any form of politicization of activities and whether any measures had been envisaged to prevent that danger. Brazil was also very interested in obtaining information on the division of labour among the various Secretariat units in order to enhance coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance. A clear assignment of responsibilities was desirable with regard to the question of obtaining access to emergency areas. It was his delegation's understanding that the Under-Secretary-General had the main responsibility for negotiating access for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The availability of early-warning information was a crucial element in ensuring preparedness for emergencies. He inquired whether there were arrangements to ensure that all such information processed by the Secretariat was promptly made available to the countries concerned. Lastly, it would be useful to have more detailed information on the internal organization of the Department, particularly with regard to the relationship between the Geneva and New York offices. An organizational chart indicating levels, functions and responsibilities could be included in the report to be submitted to the General Assembly.

Mr. MUTHANA (Observer for Yemen) said that his country was grateful for the aid and support granted to the people and Government of Yemen by the United Nations agencies, especially during the current difficult and challenging period following reunification. Yemeni society at every level was firmly resolved to effect sweeping economic, social, political and administrative reforms. It realized that that would require sincere national

(Mr. Muthana, Observer, Yemen)

efforts as well as the mobilization of support so as to ensure the minimum conditions for success and prevent current economic and social difficulties from leading to further long-term structural deficiencies.

In addition, the Gulf crisis had resulted in the return of a particularly large number of Yemeni nationals from abroad, increasing the population by 7 per cent, while at the same time the rate of inflation had been 20 per cent (1991). Considering the country's many problems: the loss of its principal source of foreign currency; the abrupt decline in real income; the resulting burden of foreign loans, which had reached critical proportions; and an unprecedented unemployment rate of 40 per cent, Yemen was one of the countries that had suffered most from the war. In addition it was currently experiencing the worst drought of modern times and crowds of refugees continued to stream in daily from the Horn of Africa. All that had occurred at a time when its sources of foreign support had shrunk considerably. Furthermore, Yemen received no compensation for what it suffered as a result of the Gulf war or for the considerable humanitarian aid and services that it provided to the refugees.

The Government had done as much as it could with respect to reform efforts; further efforts would depend on the support and assistance it received from friendly States and organizations; moreover, in order for the reform measures already taken to bear fruit, basic economic problems such as unemployment, inflation and the balance-of-payments deficit had to be overcome or mitigated, and that, too, could be achieved only with outside support.

The reunification of Yemen was based on the principles of democratic choice, political and ideological diversity, the guaranteeing of human rights and liberties, and peace; moreover, its aims were to strengthen economic and cultural ties with the rest of the world, enhance the role of the private sector in development, consciously adopt market mechanisms and create dynamic competition.

Finally he appealed for prompt assistance to extend a helping hand for the victims of war and destruction both within Somalia and without.

Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands) said that he fully agreed that the international community must share responsibility for coping with the urgent emergency situations facing Governments and peoples in various parts of the world, and expressed full support for the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. The issues which DHA addressed were important not only because of their humanitarian aspects but also because of the political implications of instability and insecurity. The Netherlands hoped that the Secretary-General would bear that in mind when deciding on the allocation of manpower resources to the Department. Constraints of such a practical nature should not prevent DHA from carrying out its functions fully and effectively.

The coordinating role of the Under-Secretary-General should also fully apply to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. The Netherlands appreciated the role played by UNHCR as lead agency in the field and looked forward to the results of the conference to be held in Geneva at the end of the month. In view of the exceptional nature of the problems facing the international community in addressing that humanitarian situation, the Netherlands wished to know how the Under-Secretary-General viewed his own role and that of the Department in that area. It was his delegation's understanding that the Under-Secretary-General had the main responsibility for negotiating access for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Lastly, he stressed that the Department had a central role to play in the field of "humanitarian diplomacy" and needed the unwavering support of the Secretariat and all Member States.

Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICH (Austria) said that Austria's overarching interest in the appointment of a high-level relief coordinator was that the United Nations capacity for providing a rapid and well-coordinated response to major and complex disasters should be enhanced. Coordination was crucial if the United Nations was to develop its humanitarian potential to the fullest. It was of course essential for Governments to adopt consistent positions in the various bodies concerned.

Austria shared the concern expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom regarding the adequacy of the human resources available to the

(Ms. Freudenschuss-Reich, Austria)

emergency coordinator, and would welcome more precise information regarding the duties and responsibilities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Her Government was pleased that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, to which it had made a contribution, had become operational. It was an important tool for the coordinator, as it would enable him to react rapidly and to fast-emerging needs.

Austria welcomed the fact that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had become the focal point for the collection, analysis and dissemination of early warning information on disasters and emergencies.

Her delegation would be interested to know when the system-wide review, referred to in document E/1991/79, to which the Council's attention had been drawn would be available for study.

In conclusion, she informed the Council that Austria had decided to allocate 5 million schillings to the UNHCR programme for refugees from Mozambique in Zimbabwe and 11 million schillings for water and sanitation projects in Mozambique. Five thousand tonnes of wheat would also be donated to Mozambique in the framework of the International Convention on Food Aid. That was in addition to the aid provided by private humanitarian organizations to countries in southern Africa.

Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said that to date only one decision had been taken to use the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. That decision was to allocate $2 million for the situation in Kenya, which included the refugee situation between Somalia and Kenya. DHA was currently processing a second request from UNICEF relating to the situation in Somalia. The purpose of the Fund was to avoid time lags between the occurrence of emergency situations and the international response to appeals by the countries affected. It was too early to say how long the "initial phase" of an emergency situation was or how many days were to be covered by resources. The Department's role was to process requests made by the operational agencies. To date, only UNICEF had applied for funds. There were very strict rules stipulating that funds disbursed should be returned once a consolidated appeal had taken place. In some cases, that might have reduced the readiness of the agencies to apply for funds. There were also

(Mr. Eliasson)

many cases in which the prospects for obtaining funds through consolidated appeals were uncertain.

There was as yet no basis for determining whether the Department should respond to a large number of emergency cases or a smaller number. That would depend on how the agencies wished to use the Fund. In the case of Somalia and Yugoslavia, the problem was less one of resources than one of access and security. He met regularly with the two Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs and the Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations in order to discuss matters of common interest. Cooperation at the working level was also very good and mainly entailed an exchange of information rather than a discussion of policy options. He was very aware of the risk of politicizing humanitarian operations and stressed the importance of maintaining the humanitarian character and integrity of such operations in order to ensure success. Although successful humanitarian operations could have a positive general effect on developments in areas of conflict, that was just a side effect and should not be taken into consideration in the operations. Nevertheless, political and humanitarian questions were often intertwined. In discussing the situations in Somalia and Yugoslavia, the Security Council considered both the humanitarian dimensions as well as the security aspects. To the extent possible, however, humanitarian operations must be viewed separately since the key to success lay in keeping humanitarian issues above political considerations.

Answering the question from Brazil, he said that the negotiations were being conducted by the agencies themselves and cited impressive achievements in Yugoslavia, where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had successfully conducted negotiations on the question of access to emergency areas, and in Mozambique, where a major agreement had been reached with RENAMO, following the recent talks in Rome, at which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had participated, on his suggestion.

In response to the comments by the representative of the Netherlands, he reiterated the view he had expressed earlier to the Council that it was the

(Mr. Eliasson)

common responsibility of all Member States to ensure the effective implementation and follow-up of resolution 46/182, not only for the benefit of the victims, but also for the Organization to prove itself in the humanitarian, economic and social fields. In the case of Yugoslavia, he agreed that the mechanisms established by resolution 46/182, namely, the emergency relief coordinator, and the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs should play a key role. UNHCR had been given the lead agency role long before the creation of that Department, however, and was doing extremely valuable work in the affected area. An inter-agency mechanism would be set up to deal with the problem and, to that end, he was calling a meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, immediately following the international conference on the refugee problem in Yugoslavia, which was to be held in Geneva at the end of July. That meeting might be followed by an inter-agency needs assessment mission or a consolidated appeal, using another instrument established under resolution 46/182, and he warned that the initial figures for the appeal for Yugoslavia, set in April 1992, would have to be considerably increased, in view of recent developments in that part of the world.

Finally, in response to the question put by Austria, he said that he hoped to report to the Council again later in the year, by which time an organizational chart of the new Department would have been prepared.

Mr. JUPPIN de FONDAUMIERE (United Nations International Drug Control Programme) said that illicit cultivation of and trafficking in narcotics in the Middle East remained a serious problem that should be addressed during the current reconstruction period in Lebanon. The International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) had undertaken a fact-finding mission in Lebanon in May 1992 and had visited the Bekaa valley. In the areas it had visited it had seen that all opium poppy crops had been eradicated. Due to the economic problems faced by the inhabitants of the area, an integrated programme was now greatly needed to promote development, create jobs and bring hope. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia was currently working on replacement of illicit crops in the Bekaa valley area. UNDCP would actively support efforts to assist farmers directly affected by that undertaking. It planned to

(Mr. Juppin de Fondaumière)

organize a meeting in Beirut, possibly by September 1992, with all agencies interested in follow-up action, and in the meantime was studying a cooperation programme aimed at the assessment of drug abuse, assistance in improving control of pharmaceutical products containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and strengthening the capacities of the Lebanese drug enforcement agencies.

Mr. ZUPANJEVAC (Yugoslavia) said that great strides had been made over the previous year in strengthening the Organization's potential to deal with natural and man-made disasters. Yet, paradoxically, that same year had seen human suffering and deprivation caused by war and natural catastrophes on an almost unprecedented scale. In particular, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had formed the epicentre of the greatest humanitarian tragedy in Europe since the Second World War.

While the territory of the Federal Republic was not directly affected by the hostilities in the region, they had led to an overwhelming flow of refugees into the country. The harsh economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council had further exacerbated the economic situation in Yugoslavia, leading to large-scale poverty. The authorities were struggling to provide basic medical care and foodstuffs, the import and local production of which had been adversely affected by the sanctions.

The newly-elected Government of the Federal Republic had pledged to work for an immediate cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to restore trust and cooperation between the Federal Republic and the newly-independent States created from the former Yugoslavia. To that end, it planned to conclude separate agreements with each of the new States addressing key issues of human and social rights. While an amnesty had been proposed, the Federal Republic refused to accept the so-called "ethnic cleansing" of certain territories and would do everything in its power, including the provision of humanitarian aid, to create the necessary conditions for refugees to return to their homes under conditions of personal safety. Finally, he expressed his delegation's full support for the proposed international conference in Geneva on the refugee situation in the region and pledged the readiness of his Government to do everything in its power to facilitate the Conference's work.

Mr. SIEBER (Observer for Switzerland) said that Switzerland welcomed the establishment of a post of coordinator for humanitarian emergencies at the Under-Secretary-General level and had contributed US$ 2 million to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

With respect to Yugoslavia, Switzerland fully supported the convening of an international conference on assistance to the victims to the conflict, and also endorsed the initiative of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to organize an inter-agency meeting immediately after the conference.

In addition, Switzerland believed that aid efforts in the Horn of Africa should be better coordinated and suggested that the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs should convene an international coordination conference for that region as well, as a first step towards the future peace conference.

Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) recalled that his delegation had joined the consensus on General Assembly resolution 46/182, and he welcomed the measures undertaken in recent months to implement the resolution.

His Government had joined other concerned Governments in pledging a substantial amount to extend humanitarian assistance to those suffering from the effects of the severe drought in southern Africa.

Humanitarian assistance was needed in many parts of the world. Japan had studied with great interest the report of the Secretary-General concerning the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking and for peace-keeping (A/46/277-S/24111), which explored how humanitarian assistance might lend itself to preventive deployment and to limiting or controlling violence. His delegation hoped that the emergency relief coordinator would further develop such efforts.

Humanitarian assistance activities should include prevention, preparedness, stand-by capacity, coordination, and rehabilitation and development. His Government's recent amendment of part of the Law related to the dispatch of Japanese disaster relief teams was pertinent to such activities and especially to the stand-by capacity; it would enable Japan to play a more active role by contributing personnel to international relief efforts.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

His delegation was pleased with the various operational arrangements that had been made, and noted with particular satisfaction that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund had already reached its target of $50 million and was operational. The Government of Japan had contributed $5 million to the Fund and hoped that it would enable the United Nations to respond to humanitarian emergencies in a swift and timely manner.

Inter-agency cooperation was of the utmost importance in strengthening coordination capacity. Good cooperative relations had already been established under the emergency relief coordinator, who had demonstrated leadership in coordinating emergency operations, for example in the Horn of Africa, Iraq and Yugoslavia.

His Government supported the concept of consolidated appeals, and had responded positively to the consolidated appeals launched recently for Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and Kenya.

Mr. FRIIS (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that during the past few years the world had witnessed a succession of natural and man-made disasters of unprecedented scope and complexity. The immense human suffering which such disasters caused underscored the obligation of the international community to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182. The decision to establish a post of emergency relief coordinator within the United Nations Secretariat reflected a need for better coordination of operational activities and a conviction that United Nations action should be combined with political initiatives to facilitate humanitarian relief and long-term solutions to man-made emergencies. The Nordic countries pledged to support the new coordinator in his difficult task.

The Nordic delegations hoped that the remaining tasks in connection with the structural reorganization of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs would soon be completed and emphasized that the Department would be unable fully to meet expectations unless its resources were commensurate with the importance of its tasks.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee was an important new instrument.

(Mr. Friis, Observer, Denmark)

However, if its objective of improved coordination was to be achieved, a spirit of genuine partnership, a deepened sense of responsibility and a clearer division of labour were required. The increased use of consolidated inter-agency appeals was a step in that direction. The importance of improved collaboration and coordination at the field level also must be fully appreciated. The attention given to the coordination of humanitarian assistance by the Governing Council of UNDP augured well as an indication that the necessary will and understanding did exist. The Economic and Social Council had an important function in reviewing progress with respect to coordination.

Wherever possible, humanitarian operations should be integrated with efforts to resolve the underlying causes of the particular crisis. The task of combining relief, rehabilitation and development remained a major challenge, and disaster prevention and preparedness must be integrated with overall development efforts.

The development of a central emergency response capacity of the United Nations system was a salient feature of improved coordination. Consideration should also be given to establishing a central international emergency stockpile, supplemented by small regional stockpiles. The new Central Emergency Revolving Fund should prove a useful new instrument at the disposal of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

The new system for providing humanitarian assistance and emergency relief would require the involvement of the United Nations, disaster-stricken countries, donors and governmental and non-governmental organizations. A small number of countries currently bore an unreasonably large share of the burden of financing United Nations humanitarian operations. Improved burden-sharing also was a matter of fairness, the importance of which should not be underestimated when it came to maintaining domestic political support in countries which were substantial donors. Most developed countries should contribute more. It was disappointing that the new Fund had received hardly any contributions from developing countries.

In view of the need to ensure that humanitarian aid was provided as efficiently as possible to all who were affected, political motives must not

(Mr. Friis, Observer, Denmark)

be allowed to prevent Governments and other parties from ensuring access to all those in need.

In general, non-governmental organizations had adapted well to the new challenges of providing humanitarian relief in an efficient and coordinated manner. Their valuable competence and experience in providing a quick and cost-effective response remained an essential complement to the activities of governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said that Russia had welcomed the structural reforms in the field of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, which reflected the Organization's growing authority and importance in that area. The new Department of Humanitarian Affairs should make efforts to eliminate duplication and to develop channels for the mutually beneficial exchange of experience.

With the incorporation of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) into the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, his delegation believed that the Department should be actively involved not only in efforts to eliminate the consequences of disasters but also in measures to prevent them. The goals of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction should be attained through close cooperation between the Secretariat and the Centre for Emergency Environmental Assistance currently being established.

At the national level, Russia was reorganizing its own structures to ensure a more effective response to emergencies, through such measures as the establishment of appropriate state bodies, the organization of seminars and the conclusion of bilateral agreements with other countries. He hoped that Russian experts would be invited to participate in emergency projects and programmes of the United Nations and to join international expert groups. The new State Committee dealing with emergencies and natural disasters and the Russian Space Agency could both play an important role in that regard. The Agency could provide, on a commercial basis, remote sensing services related to natural disasters and communication links between emergency missions and headquarters. In addition, Russia was prepared to organize a seminar on the monitoring of volcanoes and the planning of preventive measures as part of its contribution to the work of UNDRO.

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

The support pledged to his country at the recent conferences in Washington and Lisbon, held with the participation of the Secretariat, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other agencies, bore witness to the positive changes in global relations and multilateral cooperation and Russia looked forward to the practical implementation of the decisions taken at those conferences, particularly with regard to the transition from programmes of an emergency nature to medium- and long-term cooperation projects and programmes.

Mr. MAHMOUD (Observer for Lebanon), highlighting portions of the report of the Secretary-General on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/47/291-E/1992/95), noted that the encouraging economic results of 1991 had not been sustainable during the current year and that the social unrest generated by the further depreciation of the Lebanese pound had prompted the new Government to put the economic and financial crisis at the top of its agenda. The rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and public services, the reorganization of the administration and the health-care system, the planning and reconstruction of the education sector and the adoption of measures to assist some 500,000 displaced persons were just a few examples of the formidable challenges facing the Government. As the report pointed out in paragraph 12, "recent investment performance in the public sector [was] not commensurate in any way with the vast needs of immediate rehabilitation".

His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Resident Coordinator. The latter's efforts to establish a coherent framework for enhanced coordination among United Nations agencies, the upgrading of existing agencies and the expansion of their presence at Beirut, the needs assessment missions which had been sent during the preceding year and the agencies' contribution to national reconstruction planning efforts. He hoped that the technical cooperation programme to sensitize donors and mobilize resources through an international campaign would meet with a positive response. The active involvement of United Nations agencies in the reconstruction effort was an important factor in the Government's reconstruction and development policies. His delegation also hoped that the Secretary-General's Trust Fund for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon would receive much-needed financial support.

(Mr. Mahmoud, Observer, Lebanon)

The Government and people of Lebanon appreciated the assistance extended by donor countries, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. They commended the achievements of the various agencies.

His delegation welcomed the information provided earlier by the representative of UNDCP. Lebanon was now in a position to assign high priority to the eradication of drug-related crops. The success of its efforts would depend on regional and international support to enable it to expand its authority throughout its territory, bearing in mind the complexity of the problem in the Middle East. Vigorous assistance from and contributions by donor countries and the United Nations system would be needed to help his Government address the social and economic situation in areas where drug-producing plants were cultivated illegally and to create suitable alternatives for farmers in those regions, which were the least developed in the country. Efforts along those lines during the early 1970s had been very successful.

Mr. ROBLES (Mexico) expressed his appreciation of the work done by UNDRO, particularly in the area of prevention and training activities, which had made it possible to respond more quickly and efficiently to disasters.

General Assembly resolution 46/182 preserved the balance between the developing countries' legitimate concerns regarding sovereignty and the need to deliver assistance promptly and effectively.

The integrated focus of that resolution would ensure that humanitarian assistance was not limited to relief alone. Prevention of calamities was even more important. Another positive development was the concept of the continuum of humanitarian activities, from relief to rehabilitation to development as a whole.

Although availability of resources was a decisive element in coping with disasters, the will and preparedness of Governments and societies that might be affected by such events was also most important. In that context, the United Nations had encouraged the creation of coordinating committees at the national level, and a special high-level committee for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; such actions, together with an adequate and timely international response, would no doubt help mitigate the effects of such disasters.

PROGRAMME AND RELATED QUESTIONS (A/46/6 (Prog. 25-Prog. 27 and Prog. 29-Prog. 35), A/47/16, Part I)

Mr. DUVAL (Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 were the first to be prepared. The final version of the plan incorporating all the modifications adopted by the General Assembly had been issued early in 1991 as document A/45/6/Rev.1 (volumes I and II). The proposed revisions modified the text of the relevant programmes contained in that document. The purpose of the revisions was to incorporate any development or mandates which had arisen since the adoption of the plan and to make necessary adjustments so that it could provide a framework for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995. Consequently, the primary focus of the revisions was the subprogramme narratives updating legislative mandates and presenting objectives and strategies. In the case of programmes or subprogrammes for which no revisions were proposed, the current priorities and activities would continue to apply in 1994-1995.

He recalled that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) had decided to consider the proposed revisions to the plan at both parts of its thirty-second session in order to enable the Secretariat to incorporate any programme changes stemming from the two recent conferences on trade and development and on environment and development and the restructuring of the Secretariat. Accordingly, CPC had already considered revisions to programmes 25-27 and 29-34, and would consider the remaining substantive programmes for which it was competent in September.

Two aspects of the revisions to the 10 programmes proposed for consideration by the Council warranted comment. Firstly, with respect to the consultative process with specialized reviewing bodies, he said that revisions to programmes 27 and 29-32 had been submitted to the relevant reviewing bodies. Revisions to the other programmes had not been reviewed because the relevant body was not meeting that year (in the case of programmes 25 and 26), the scheduled meeting had been cancelled (programme 34) or the Secretariat had not been in a position to submit the revisions (programmes 33 and 35). Only two reviewing bodies (those of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and

(Mr. Duval)

the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) had made specific recommendations, which had been incorporated to the extent possible in the revisions to programmes 30 and 31, respectively. The recommendations of ECA appeared in a corrigendum to document A/47/6 (Prog. 30) and those of ESCAP had been incorporated in document A/47/6 (Prog. 31).

The other three reviewing bodies had not made specific recommendations. Although the review process by the Economic Commission for Europe was not yet completed, most of the observations and recommendations by the Commission's subsidiary body had been incorporated in the revised programme 32. The new Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had adopted a resolution referring to the revisions proposed to programme 29.

Secondly, with regard to the scope of the revisions, he said that the revisions proposed for programme 31 (Regional cooperation for development in Asia and the Pacific) and programme 32 (Regional cooperation for development in Europe) involved extensive changes in the number, titles, content and/or ordering of the subprogrammes. In the case of ESCAP, the changes responded to the adoption of a thematic approach to the work programme of the Commission and to the streamlining of its intergovernmental machinery. In the case of the Economic Commission for Europe, the modifications responded to the recent changes which had occurred in central and eastern Europe and to the new role the Commission would play, inter alia, in assisting the countries in transition in those subregions in their efforts towards integration into the European and global economies.

The revisions proposed for programme 29 (Crime prevention and criminal justice) involved one additional subprogramme and substantive changes to the narratives of the existing three subprogrammes, in line with the programme of action recommended by the ministerial meeting held in Paris in 1991 and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/152.

The revisions proposed for programme 34 (Regional cooperation for development in Western Asia) reflected the recommendations made by an intergovernmental meeting organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in February. The revisions proposed for the other six programmes were less extensive.

(Mr. Duval)

The report of CPC on the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan was contained in paragraphs 45-113 of document A/47/16 (part I). In accordance with the recommendations of CPC, further revisions to programmes 30 and 33 and adjustments to some narratives under programme 32 would be submitted to CPC for consideration at the second part of its thirty-second session.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS A MODALITY IN THE FORMULATION, PREPARATION, EXECUTION AND EVALUATION OF THE PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (continued)

Draft resolution on Technical cooperation among developing countries (E/1992/L.29)

Ms. KELLY (Secretary of the Council) drew attention to a typographical error in the draft resolution: in the first subheading below the title the asterisk for the footnote "On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77" should be next to the word "Pakistan" rather than "China".

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan), in introducing the draft resolution, reaffirmed the validity of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action recognizing technical cooperation among developing countries as an effective tool for the implementation of programmes through the use of the relevant experience and expertise of those countries. She called on all parties to support the use of that modality, since from the point of view of developing countries it was of great importance.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Draft decision on Participation of intergovernmental organizations in the work of the Economic and Social Council (E/1992/L.27)

The PRESIDENT said that unless he heard some objection he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

For participants only

E/1992/SR.37
3 August 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 24 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

CONTENTS

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (continued)

Coordination questions:

(b) Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

(c) International cooperation in the field of informatics

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued)
(E/1992/63; E/1992/L.30)

Ms. LIMJUCO (Philippines), introducing draft resolution E/1992/L.30, said that the Council's current review of the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit was the first such review since 1947. It was clear from the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/63) that the Unit's workload had grown tremendously although the resources available to it had not increased since the 1940s. The difficulties faced by the Unit in discharging its functions called for measures of two kinds: urgent short-term action with a view to the forthcoming session of the Council's Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations; and long-term perspectives within the framework of the biennium 1994-1995. Draft resolution E/1992/L.30 addressed those concerns. The preambular part reflected the fact that it was by virtue of the Charter itself that non-governmental organizations had been brought into a consultative relationship with the Council and that their status derived from a Council resolution, 1296 (XLIV). The operative part dealt with the short- and long-term measures required. Adoption of that text would render the Unit more effective in serving the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and thus the Council itself.

COORDINATION QUESTIONS:

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (A/47/281; A/47/212-E/1992/54; E/1992/85)

(c) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS (E/1992/55, 78)

Mr. LOHIA (Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of

(Mr. Lohia)

Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples) welcomed the continued involvement of the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations in the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, including the steady flow of assistance to Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories, as noted in the report in document E/1992/85. The Special Committee was grateful to UNDP for its lead role in financing developing projects in those Territories, and to the relevant executing agencies and institutions, a number of whose recent activities he cited. Those agencies were urged to pursue and expand their development activities, especially in the Caribbean and Pacific regions, where the majority of the remaining Territories were located, and to bear in mind the handicap that some of those Territories suffered as a result of their smallness, remoteness, lack of infrastructure and dependence on external financial resources.

The aim should be not only to complete the decolonization process, for which the General Assembly had deemed the end of the twentieth century a target date, but to accelerate and monitor more closely the Territories' economic and social development, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/70. He appealed to the agencies and institutions to contribute more to discussions on those Territories, in the light of that resolution, and to provide more opportunities, in their relevant deliberations, for representatives of the Territories to take part. A draft resolution on those matters would be submitted at the end of the General debate on the current item; he hoped that the Council would give it the widest possible support.

Ms. THOMPSON (Director, Electronic Services Division, Office of General Services), introducing the report in document E/1992/78, said that it reflected the outcome of the growing availability of microcomputer technology, which, together with constantly falling prices for telecommunications, created ever more demand for access to informatics systems. Earlier major databases had not been designed with non-technical users in mind; systems and target audiences had differed, too. Although Member States had had direct dial access to United Nations databases since 1986, access procedures were not widely known. More than 56 nations currently had access to the New York

(Ms. Thompson)

Computer Section (NYCS) mainframe computer but there had been no systematic, centralized effort to keep nations informed.

As a preliminary step towards clarifying the status of the technological infrastructure of missions in New York and Geneva and identifying needs, a questionnaire had been circulated, the good response to which had shown that the computerized information of greatest interest related to full texts of documents, resolutions and treaties, press releases, bibliographic information and statistical/economic data. The response had also identified problems still to be addressed: the need for user-friendly access and a continuous flow of information to Member States, continuous training programmes, policy coordination and the expansion of on-line access to the United Nations system as a whole. Although much could be done within existing resources, the longer-term solution would require funds for the requisite technology and staffing.

Mr. KHAN (Chief, Inter-Agency Coordination Branch, Department of Economic and Social Development), introducing the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/1992/55), said that the report responded to the Council's request contained in resolution 1991/71, with a view to regular consultations and coordination concerning informatics within the United Nations system and to the strengthening of subprogrammes concerning international cooperation and regional strategies in informatics in developing countries.

The current and planned activities outlined in section I of the report focused on two main types of project. The first, of a global nature, focused on coordination at the level of headquarters of agencies and institutions with a view to making information generally available among them as well as to Governments. The second aimed at coordination in regard to technical cooperation projects, at national or regional levels, aimed at strengthening developing countries' capacities in the field of informatics. The activities also reflected the wide diversity of mandates throughout the United Nations system, which could be listed under three general categories: general research and development in areas of potential application to developing countries, including strategies and policies for informatics; dissemination of

(Mr. Khan)

technology through training workshops, seminars, advisory services and software development; and the development of international databases and information systems in specific fields such as management, technical cooperation and statistics.

The report also highlighted the main existing coordination mechanisms in the United Nations system, such as the Advisory Committee for Coordination of Information Systems (ACCIS) and the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. The recommendations contained in section II of the report included the development of a general framework for overall inter-agency coordination of information systems with a view to their systematic application in developing countries.

He was confident that the Council would endorse the findings and recommendations contained in the report and would encourage agencies and Governments to promote consultations and coordination concerning informatics with a view to enhancing international cooperation in that important field.

Mr. SHAUKAT (Pakistan) said that the report in document E/1992/78 recognized the Member States' desire for easy access to United Nations databases, while noting that procedures for access to them were not yet widely known and that no systematic, centralized effort had been made to keep Governments and their missions informed. His delegation noted with interest the Secretariat's measures in response to Council resolution 1991/70. It urged the Electronic Services Division of the Office of General Services to expedite the plans to simplify access to the main database systems, and suggested that ACCIS and UNITAR should arrange more training programmes for the diplomatic communities in Geneva and in New York. The Member States must also be kept fully and continuously informed about United Nations database activities; their representatives must be actively associated with, and duly represented on, relevant executive and governing bodies such as the International Computing Centre (ICC) and ACCIS in order that the Member States, as end users, could be given due priority. The Secretariat should take urgent measures accordingly, if necessary by means of a phased programme, the initial phases of which could be supported from existing resources. In that regard, Pakistan would co-sponsor a draft resolution for adoption at the Council's current session. His delegation appreciated the role of the

(Mr. Shaukat, Pakistan)

Intergovernmental Informatics Programme of UNESCO, and urged the United Nations system to formulate suitable training programmes, including programmes to impart software expertise in the developing countries.

Mr. SHAHEED (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the importance of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples was evidenced by the fact that more than half of the current membership of the Organization could trace their independence, in part, to its adoption. The Special Committee on decolonization had constantly stressed the need for the establishment of conditions that would facilitate the development of colonial Territories after independence, and the General Assembly had repeatedly called for cooperation by the United Nations system to that end.

The General Assembly had repeatedly reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Pending the attainment of self-determination, the General Assembly had stated the need for development projects in the occupied territories and the establishment of development banks to promote investment and thus improve living conditions.

Unfortunately, the assistance provided by the United Nations system was not commensurate with the problem facing the Arab people, who were the victims of a misguided and arbitrary Israeli security policy. The only "crime" committed by the Palestinian people was to seek self-determination, as was their inalienable right. Israel must withdraw from all the occupied territories and recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people if there was to be lasting peace in the region.

Lastly, he welcomed the cooperation between the Special Committee on decolonization and the Special Committee against Apartheid in seeking to apply the provisions of the Declaration so as to eliminate the last vestiges of colonialism.

Mr. OWOLABI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1991/71, had recommended regular consultation and coordination within the United Nations system in the field of informatics. Accordingly UNESCO had included informatics among its priorities for the biennium 1992-1993. The main focus was on human resources development and on the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP).

(Mr. Owolabi, UNESCO)

The emphasis in human resources development was on training in informatics. A substantial element was the Informafrica programme, aimed at developing specialized personnel and promoting exchanges of information on informatics.

The aim of IIP was to strengthen regional cooperation and to contribute to the development of informatics infrastructures. UNESCO was involved in coordinating the sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee for IIP and in providing hardware, software and documentation to least developed countries. IIP projects included developing centres for the production of software and strengthening the existing regional informatics networks.

UNESCO was concerned to avoid duplication by the specialized agencies, and coordinated its programme of activities with its fellow agencies.

Mr. WHANNOU (Benin) said that the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had inspired the attainment of independence by many colonial territories, including his own country. His Government firmly supported the United Nations strategy for the elimination of colonialism by the year 2000. The Special Committee on decolonization and the Secretariat must make the international community aware of the problems facing Non-Self-Governing Territories so that conditions could be promoted that would facilitate the exercise of the right to self-determination.

In that connection his delegation welcomed the role played by the specialized agencies. It was important to ensure that their activities were coordinated so as to maximize the impact of scarce resources in the promotion of sustainable development. That supposed prior policy coordination, which in turn implied providing those concerned with an opportunity to make their views known regarding their social and economic development. To that end administering Powers should promote regional seminars, similar to the one recently held in Grenada. His delegation welcomed the suggestion made at that seminar for the establishment of a unit to ensure coordination of specialized-agency activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories, a proposal which the Council should support.

Mr. KHADER (United Nations Development Programme) said that UNDP had joined with its fellow agencies and other development partners in seeking ways to help South Africa's transition to a post-apartheid society. Since UNDP was not mandated to support operational activities within South Africa, it had limited its involvement to externally based projects aimed at assisting national liberation movements in the field of human resources development.

During the fifth programming cycle UNDP would continue to support health and education programmes for South African groups in exile. The Programme had established an informal consultative forum with other multilateral donors to identify areas for collaboration in post-apartheid South Africa. The participants in the forum had announced their intention to establish a trust fund as a catalyst for resource mobilization. UNDP would continue to work with those partners in meeting needs already identified.

UNDP was committed to operating within the parameters established by resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, and fully supported a coordinated approach to assisting development in South Africa.

UNDP assistance to the Palestinian people was concentrated in four key sectors: environmental management, private-sector development, human development and women in development. The Governing Council had authorized a 25-per-cent increase in core resources for the period 1992-1996.

Nevertheless, the resources available to assist the Palestinian people were modest in comparison with their extraordinary needs, and their overall conditions of life remained difficult. UNDP had engaged in a needs assessment exercise to help ensure that its work was targeted, relevant and sustainable. Should further development efforts be required as a result of the current peace negotiations, UNDP was well positioned to respond. Lastly, the programme had commissioned a review of its role and modus operandi, which would be available by the end of 1992.

Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine) thanked Member States, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and other organizations that provided assistance to the Palestinian people, and urged them to continue and expand their cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). He also hoped that the Israeli authorities would remove the obstacles that they had

(Mr. Abu-Koash, Observer, Palestine)

placed in the path of inter-agency development projects on behalf of the Palestinian people, and that they would put into practical effect the new message of peace.

Palestinians had greatly suffered because of the Gulf crisis in terms of employment and economic recession, and the international community should play its part in the effort to bring about reconstruction and the reintegration of Palestinians displaced as a result of the conflict.

Israel should be accountable for all the losses and expropriations to which the Palestinian population had been subjected, and should end its occupation of Palestinian territories, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon.

His delegation was deeply grateful to UNDP for its continuing help, and expressed the hope that, in the new atmosphere of political change, the international community would continue to press for the implementation of projects which the Israeli Government had consistently blocked.

Mr. DEEN (Inter Press Service News Agency) said that, as an international non-governmental organization with a global communications network spread across 85 developing countries, Inter Press Service (IPS) had traditionally worked in close collaboration with the United Nations system. It focused on key development issues. As a non-governmental organization with category I consultative status with the Council, IPS wished to share its expertise in the field of informatics and communications with the United Nations system, and specifically with the new Department of Economic and Social Development. It would also welcome the opportunity to share its experience, particularly in database and software development and information services, with the regional commissions, United Nations agencies and Member States.

The regional commissions, which now maintained databases on economic, social and demographic statistics, could be considerably strengthened if they were able to avail themselves of the voluminous news output of the IPS wire service, which was closely focused on the United Nations system, both at the headquarters level and in the field. At a wider international level, IPS had already become involved in the Rome-based Technological Information Pilot System (TIPS), established in 1984 by UNDP to promote and sustain South-South technical cooperation. Administered by IPS and financed largely by the

(Mr. Deen)

Italian Government, TIPS was a mechanism for the daily exchange of information on scientific, technological and business opportunities in developing countries. It had so far produced more than 32,000 detailed information abstracts on 14 different scientific, technological and business sectors. It had also gathered information on more than 10,000 companies offering and requesting products and processes which were not yet part of the TIPS network, but which might be interested in future membership. With the aim of furnishing appropriate information technology to countries of the South, IPS had also designed and implemented a programme to computerize six African news agencies, with financial assistance from the Italian Government.

Although relatively new to the ranks of non-governmental organizations, IPS was aware of the increasingly active role of those organizations in the United Nations system. As one of the few communications-oriented Non-Governmental Organizations enjoying consultative status with the Council, IPS wished to contribute its expertise in order to enhance the information flow within that system.

In conclusion, he suggested that in any future study on informatics, it would be useful to survey the number of Non-Governmental Organizations with information data that could be shared with other non-governmental bodies, the United Nations system and Member States.

Mr. TENNE (Observer for Israel) said that numerous and fanciful allegations, misconceptions and errors had been made in the course of the Council's debates on such issues as human rights, sovereignty over national resources and the advancement of women: all of them concerned the situation in the territories administered by Israel, and most were ill-intentioned. It was time to set the record straight.

Four years of strikes and other problems related to the violence which went under the name of the intifadah had taken their toll on the economy of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. In 1991, the Gulf war had dealt a further blow to the economy of the area. In the first part of 1991, the economy had been adversely affected by Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein; direct and indirect financial assistance provided by the Gulf States and other Arab countries had been withdrawn as a result of the position taken by the PLO during the Gulf war; worsening economic conditions in Jordan had led to a loss

(Mr. Tenne, Observer, Israel)

of employment opportunities and the return to the area of local residents; disruptive strikes had discouraged Israeli businessmen from employing Palestinians; and disturbances had led to the imposition of curfews. In addition, markets in some Arab countries had been closed, or virtually closed, to products and produce from the area as a result of Arab anger at the PLO's pro-Iraqi position during the Gulf crisis, and rising unemployment in Israel caused by the recession and higher immigration had led to increased competition for a limited number of jobs.

The economic situation in the administered territories at the end of the Gulf war had thus been typified by stagnation, high unemployment and uncertainty regarding the future. However, despite a general mood of depression following the defeat of Iraq, which many Palestinians had seen as the champion of their cause, an atmosphere of greater realism and pragmatism had emerged, manifested in the widespread desire to concentrate on economic recovery and development.

A principal aim of the authorities in the territories in 1991 had been to spur the new mood of realism and to promote economic growth through the encouragement of investments, the improvement of productive capacity and the creation of new sources of employment. In particular, an administrative order adopted in June 1991 on encouragement of capital investments had provided for the creation and recognition of approved enterprises and approved investments, with a wide range of tax benefits. That represented a notable departure in that requests to open new businesses had previously been assessed on the criterion of the competition they might generate between the local economy and the economy inside Israel. That was no longer a consideration, and approval was now granted even where there was direct competition with existing Israeli businesses. Moreover, existing enterprises which wished to expand their activities could enjoy tax benefits for the expansion. New regulations had also been issued in November 1991 with the aim of simplifying the income-tax structure in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and, where possible, reducing the tax burden on individuals.

By the end of 1991, it had become clear that, despite the severe setbacks of the Gulf war, the economic situation in the area had entered a phase of recovery, in which the civil administration played a key role. In various

(Mr. Tenne, Observer, Israel)

sectors of the economy, there had been a significant upward swing, particularly in quarrying, the establishment of new enterprises, and tourism. There was thus evidence of prospects for future growth and a growing interest in establishing enterprises which could spearhead economic development.

The administration's underlying objective was to encourage the development of small industries by promoting economic investment and entrepreneurial initiatives. Much remained to be done, and the administration would continue its efforts to promote economic and social activity in the territories, in conjunction with parallel efforts by other countries and international bodies. The extent of the programmes listed in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/212-E/1992/54) indicated that the situation in the territories was anything but stagnant, and that the impact of international assistance, with Israeli guidance and encouragement, was making itself felt in a wide range of economic activities.

Eventually, however, the Palestinians living in those territories must realize that assistance could be fully delivered only by the Palestinians themselves. Their professed supporters in the United Nations and in other international organizations would not act for them. The Palestinians should seize the opportunity to work with the Israeli authorities in creating a future in which resources were no longer devoted to violence but to social and economic progress for all.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

UNITED
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Economic and Social Council

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For participants only

E/1992/SR.38
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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 27 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

CONTENTS

Operational activities for development (continued)

Coordination questions (continued):

(b) Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (continued)

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (continued)

Establishment of new subsidiary bodies of the Council (continued)

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution E/1992/L.34 (Activities of the United Nations system in the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States)

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, announced that the Russian Federation had joined the sponsors. He said that the draft resolution stemmed from the desire of all Member States to ensure that the United Nations development system acted in an integrated and coordinated way in its operations in the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Decisions on the subject had already been adopted by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the aim of the draft resolution was to address a similar message to the whole of the United Nations development system. The draft resolution was based largely on decision 92/43 of the UNDP Governing Council and stressed the need for an integrated approach and presence in the countries concerned, while inviting the Secretary-General to prepare a report on ways of achieving that goal. The draft resolution reflected views which were widely shared both by Member States and the United Nations agencies and funds, and he hoped it would be adopted by consensus.

COORDINATION QUESTIONS (continued):

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued)

Draft resolution E/1992/L.35 (Assistance to the Palestinian people)

Mr. JOMAA (Observer for Tunisia), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that its aim was to express appreciation to the States, United Nations bodies, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that had provided assistance to the Palestinian people, and to

(Mr. Jomaa, Observer, Tunisia)

urge them to continue to do so. The draft resolution was similar to those adopted in previous years, except for paragraph 9, which called for a seminar to be convened on assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory and asked the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to consider convening such a seminar. The draft resolution did not present any problems and he hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

Mr. ZAINUDDIN (Malaysia) said that his delegation wished to join the sponsors of the draft resolution.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

Draft resolution E/1992/L.31 (Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon)

Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, now joined by Algeria, said that the text appealed to all Member States and all organizations of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to mobilize assistance for the Government of Lebanon in its reconstruction and development efforts. Following the restoration of security and stability in the country, the Government of Lebanon had made great efforts to revive the economy and restore its authority throughout the country. The efforts of the Government and people of Lebanon deserved the support and assistance of the world community, following the long crisis which the country had endured, and he called on all Member States to support the draft resolution, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution E/1992/L.33 (Assistance to Yemen)

Mr. DJACTA (Algeria), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that the aim was to strengthen the economic and social infrastructure of Yemen, which was facing grave economic problems and pressures, mainly as a result of the weakness of its economy and the long-term consequences of the Gulf crisis. The problems created by the return of migrant workers and the increasing flow of refugees from Somalia had been compounded by rising inflation and substantial foreign debt. The draft resolution welcomed the Round-table Conference for Yemen recently held in Geneva, and urged the international community to contribute to the follow-up

(Mr. Djacta, Algeria)

to that conference. In other respects, the draft resolution was similar to those adopted in previous years and he hoped it would be adopted by consensus.

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COUNCIL (continued)

Draft resolution E/1992/L.32 (Establishment of new subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council)

Mr. UMER (Pakistan), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the Group attached considerable importance to the new subsidiary bodies, namely the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and Energy for Development, which would contribute to the efforts of the international community towards sustainable development. He called on the Council to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (E/1992/59)

Mr. PETERS (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing the report of the High Commissioner (E/1992/59), said that the refugee flows of the post-cold-war era had brought the world's refugee population to an unprecedented 17 million. Their speed, scale and complexity had challenged both UNHCR's capacity to respond and the international community's ability to achieve regional and global security. At the same time, actual or potential solutions to refugee problems were emerging in many areas and, despite a dampening of the optimism experienced two years previously, the impetus towards democracy in many parts of the world was opening the way to solu'ions, the most welcome being voluntary repatriation. The High Commissioner's report gave an exhaustive account of the past year's developments.

The situation in Africa, which hosted some 30 per cent of the world's refugees, remained a priority of UNHCR. The impact of successive emergencies on drought victims, refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in the Horn of Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Liberia had been particularly severe. In Malawi, the problem of the growing Mozambican refugee population was further complicated by the drought in southern Africa. In West Africa, substantial assistance programmes had had to be maintained pending the

(Mr. Peters)

establishment of conditions conducive to the large-scale repatriation of Liberian refugees; escalation of conflict in Sierra Leone had precipitated a major new exodus of refugees into Guinea and Liberia; and events such as those in Zaire and the Central African Republic, which had involved large influxes of Sudanese, had necessitated further UNHCR intervention. Nevertheless, progress in establishing peace and democratic government in many parts of Africa had improved the prospects for the return home of over 1 million refugees.

Asia had experienced positive developments as well as disturbing new trends. In early 1992, there had been a large flow of refugees from Myanmar into Bangladesh; UNHCR, in collaboration with WFP, UNICEF, WHO and local and international non-governmental organizations, had assisted the Government of Bangladesh in mobilizing assistance. A further problem had been the growing influx of ethnic Nepalese fleeing from Bhutan.

Developments in South-East Asia, on the other hand, had been much more positive. The influx of boat people into the region's countries of first asylum had become almost negligible in 1992; and since 1989 over 25,000 had returned to Viet Nam within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan of Action. Following the signature of a tripartite memorandum of understanding, a voluntary programme to repatriate the 370,000 Cambodian refugees in Thailand, coordinated by a Senior Special Envoy of the High Commissioner, had been launched in March 1992. Since many of them wished to engage in activities other than agriculture, UNHCR had decided to diversify its strategy. To date, some 50,000 refugees had returned home under the programme, 20,000 of them in June 1992. In addition to the immediate assistance provided to returnees, "quick impact" projects had been established, in collaboration with UNDP, to promote the economic viability of affected communities. Unresolved tensions in Cambodia, however, and the fragility of the peace process, remained causes for concern.

In Afghanistan, the acceleration of political and military developments in early 1992 had led to a dramatic increase in spontaneous voluntary repatriation from Pakistan and Iran; some 600,000 had returned since the beginning of the year. Returnees received a cash grant from UNHCR and

(Mr. Peters)

a wheat allowance from WFP. Of roughly 3.2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 3 million in Iran prior to the start of repatriation in 1990, almost 1 million had returned home. Because of unresolved problems faced by returnees, UNHCR planned a field presence to identify needs at the community level, develop immediate reintegration programmes and alert other agencies to emergency or rehabilitation needs.

In the Middle East, UNHCR had been confronted, between April and December 1991, with the swiftest refugee influx in its history, when some 1.8 million Iraqi refugees had entered the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. In response, the largest emergency air transport operation ever undertaken by UNHCR had been launched, in conjunction with a massive emergency procurement operation. By December 1991, over 90 per cent of the refugees had been repatriated. A shelter programme for 62,000 returnee and internally displaced families had been mounted; UNHCR and non-governmental organizations had assisted the return to some 1,500 villages in northern Iraq during that period, and had implemented "quick impact" projects to pave the way for the rehabilitation phase of the United Nations Plan of Action to be implemented through other agencies. By the end of April 1992, UNHCR programme activities had been phased out; UNHCR would maintain a residual presence to monitor returns, and continued to deal with residual problems of the Middle East conflict throughout the region.

In Europe, the tragic events in the former Yugoslavia had produced some 2 million refugees and displaced persons, the largest number since the end of the Second World War. That conflict and the related human rights abuses, including so-called "ethnic cleansing" had given UNHCR its first major operational challenge in Europe for many years. As the designated lead agency, UNHCR, in close collaboration with UNICEF, WHO and ICRC, sought to monitor the security of displaced persons, prevent further displacement and promote early return wherever it was safe to do so. But the worsening situation, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had necessitated a huge humanitarian relief operation. The High Commissioner, following her recent visit to the republics of the former Yugoslavia, had called for decisive humanitarian initiative and, having consulted the Secretary-General and a

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number of Governments, had convened an international meeting on humanitarian aid to be held, at ministerial level on an informal basis, at Geneva on 29 July. The aim was to review the feasibility of returning refugees to places of origin, devise further measures, including means to protect refugees and displaced persons, and, it was hoped, mobilize international support. In the Commonwealth of Independent States, the new Baltic States and Central Europe, UNHCR had focused on emergency preparedness, refugee-law training and information-gathering as part of a strategy to prevent and mitigate potential mass-displacement problems.

Central America had, in recent years, proved a fertile testing ground for comprehensive regional approaches aimed at lasting solutions. Refugee camps had disappeared, largely because of the regional peace process and the related initiatives taken in the context of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). Returnees currently outnumbered refugees, and voluntary repatriation was expected to continue throughout the year, especially to El Salvador, Guatemala and Suriname. But full reconciliation and reintegration would be a delicate task requiring care and scrupulous monitoring, and the follow-up to CIREFCA was of crucial importance. The time-frame of the CIREFCA Plan of Action had been extended until May 1994, and UNDP and UNHCR had continued to collaborate closely, especially through the Joint Support Unit. As part of the first phase of a plan of action to repatriate Guatemalan refugees from Mexico, UNHCR had established four field offices. Although dialogue between Mexico and Guatemala had been intensified, progress would depend largely on the steps taken towards reconciliation in Guatemala itself. A further problem for the region had been a major outflow of Haitians seeking asylum in neighbouring countries and the United States. The deteriorating political, economic and human rights climate in Haiti had dashed hopes of a speedy end to the crisis; in the prevailing circumstances, UNHCR attached the greatest importance to the principle of non-refoulement and had maintained close contact with all parties to that end.

Women and children, who made up some 80 per cent of the world's refugees, were especially vulnerable to a hostile environment. UNHCR had given priority to advancing its policy on refugee women at field level, having introduced

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guidelines and deployed staff members with specific responsibility for refugee women in Malawi, Thailand and Ethiopia, the latter two in a regional capacity with regard to refugee children. In addition, a Senior Coordinator, funded by the Norwegian Government, had been appointed in May 1992 to oversee the development and promotion of a coordinated policy.

The complexity of recent events had raised demanding operational issues as well as protection concerns at the very heart of UNHCR's mandate. Questions of refugee status, protection and asylum had assumed greater urgency and complexity; the traditional distinction between refugees and internally displaced persons had in some instances become almost meaningless; and the right to seek asylum had at times been jeopardized owing to receiving States' political considerations. The High Commissioner had therefore initiated a comprehensive review to assess how UNHCR's protection activities could be strengthened, and had adopted a three-pronged strategy involving an enhanced emergency response, an intensified search for lasting solutions, notably through voluntary repatriation, and innovative preventive approaches.

Early in her mandate, the High Commissioner had made emergency response capacity a top priority, having introduced measures which included the establishment of a stand-by capacity involving emergency staffing and relief supplies, as well as the creation of emergency response teams for each region. Special agreements had also been concluded with the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish refugee councils to provide additional standby capacity in the form of seconded staff or relief supplies. The new arrangements had already proved their worth in Bangladesh, Kenya and Yemen. Closer operational partnerships had also been forged with other United Nations agencies; UNHCR welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the appointment of a United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It was increasingly evident that truly humanitarian and lasting solutions could not be achieved unless voluntary repatriation was accompanied by comprehensive reintegration and rehabilitation measures aimed at self-reliance and development for refugees and affected communities. Together with UNDP and other development and funding agencies, and in close consultation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, UNHCR had been exploring ways to improve

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the dovetailing of immediate assistance with development efforts. The "quick impact" projects, pioneered within the CIREFCA framework, were being jointly applied or planned in other locations, particularly Cambodia and the Horn of Africa.

The prevention of refugee flows was a subject on which the international community had become ever more willing to act. In that context, UNHCR had become increasingly active in actual or potential countries of origin and, in the most extreme cases such as the former Yugoslavia, had extended protection and assistance, at the Secretary-General's request, to internally displaced persons, in order to help avert external flight and, through confidence-building, encourage voluntary repatriation.

UNHCR warmly appreciated the generous financial support it had received at a time when the many crises had imposed unprecedented demands on it and on donors. But the requirements for 1992 were even greater than for 1991, already an exceptional year. More than ever, UNHCR, refugees and returnees depended on, and counted on, the international community's solidarity in providing the resources for emergency needs and durable solutions.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.